# THE EARNEST CHARGE, AND HUMBLE HOPE OF AN AFFECTIONATE PASTOR;

BEING

THE SUBSTANCE OF

THREE DISCOURSES,

ADDRESSED TO THE

CHURCH, AND CONGREGATION,

IN

COLLEGE-LANE, NORTHAMPTON,

DECEMBER 1, 1793.

And publiſhed at their Requeſt.

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WATCH AND REMEMBER.
PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL.

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BRISTOL:

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BRITISH MUSEUM

*To the Church of Chriſt, aſſembling in College-Lane, Northampton.*

My deareſt Brethren!

IN compliance with your parting requeſt, I have been induced to ſubmit theſe plain Diſcourſes to the public eye; though they were firſt compoſed in haſte, amidſt the hurry of preparation for my removal, and tranſcribed for the preſs in circumſtances equally diſadvantageous, which muſt be ſuppoſed to have attended my entrance upon a new, and important employment. But as our mutual affections, being excited by the proſpect of a ſeparation, had doubtleſs ſome effect to render them more intereſting, when you heard them from the pulpit, I was deſirous you ſhould receive them in their preſent form, before thoſe emotions had ſubſided, which may ſtill add ſome weight to the advice they contain. May the God of all grace bleſs them to your benefit, which was my prime object in conſenting to their publication,

Six and twenty years had I been your fellow-member, I had preached to you conſtantly near three and twenty; and been your Paſtor above twelve; nor were we ever more cloſely and cordially united, than at the time when the providence of God called me away from you, in ſo unexpected a manner.

Having often participated in each others pleaſures and ſorrows, I truſt we ſhall never forget one another at the throne of grace. Nothing can afford me more heart-felt joy, than to hear that you continue to ſtand faſt in the Lord. The Chief Shepherd is the ſame, Yeſterday, To-day, and For ever; and I am perſuaded he careth for you. A concern for the good of his church at large, induced you voluntarily to reſign your late Paſtor, and I truſt he will ſoon provide you with another, one after his own heart. Many who knew but little of you before, are now excited to pray for you, in conſequence of your regard for the more general welfare of Zion; and I think you may take comfort from our Lord's extenſive axiom, That *he who loſeth his life*, or any thing that he judgeth valuable, for the ſake of Chriſt, and the goſpel, *ſhall find* an ample equivalent.

I beſeech you, my dear brethren, to pray for me, that I may not diſappoint the expectations of that

that church, to whom you have now diſmiſſed me, and thoſe of our many friends, who have warmly urged my removal to a ſituation, for which I feel myſelf much too incompetent. May Grace be ſufficient for me, who ſhall be utterly inſufficient without an abundant ſupply of the Spirit of Chriſt. May I be faithful unto the death, and at length joyfully meet you, and the whole aſſembly of the church of the firſt-born, whoſe names are written in Heaven.

My new friends, as well as yourſelves, with whom I was ſo long acquainted, will here perceive pretty fully what are my views of the main doctrines of Chriſtianity. And as I wiſh not to conceal, or diſguiſe, any of my religious principles, but to have them underſtood, and impartially examined, I am not ſorry that they have ſuch an opportunity.

God grant we may all enter more fully into the ſpirit of the goſpel, and feel the ſanctifying and comforting tendency of the truth as it is in Jeſus.

With a grateful recollection of your Chriſtian friendſhip, which had been ſo often exerciſed under

under a variety of changes and trials; and with the tenderest solicitude for your highest happiness, and that of all who attended with you on my ministry.

I subscribe myself,

My dear Christian brethren,

Your sincere friend and servant,

For Christ's sake,

JOHN RYLAND.

Bristol, Jan. 29, 1794.

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# SERMON I.

Acts XX. 31.

WATCH AND REMEMBER.

I Wish to avoid giving any unneceſſary pain to you, my beloved chriſtian friends, of whoſe affection I have received ſo many undoubted proofs; and I, myſelf, could hardly ſuſtain the taſk of expreſsly taking leave of a people, with whom I have been ſo long connected, in the cloſeſt bonds of evangelical fellowſhip. In ſelecting a text, therefore, this day, out of Paul's parting addreſs to the elders of Epheſus, it has not been my intention to dwell upon that ſeparation, to which nothing has reconciled us, on either ſide, but an apprehenſion that we are therein obeying the call of Divine Providence. Much leſs will any of you ſuſpect me, of deſigning, in the choice of this paſſage, to arrogate to myſelf a compariſon with the great apoſtle; though I wiſh to notice his example, as delineated in the context, for

my own inſtruction and humiliation. It is true, I have labored among you, after an imperfect manner, for a much longer period than Paul had ſpent at Epheſus; and I am perſuaded, that we have mutually felt ſomewhat of the endearing nature of that connection, which ſubſiſts between all thoſe that are vitally united to Chriſt Jeſus. And as diſtance of place cannot ſeparate us from the ſame Head of the Church Univerſal, ſo neither ſhall it cauſe our regard for each other's ſpiritual welfare to ceaſe, or grow cool. Beſides, that circumſtance, which was moſt grievous to Paul, and to his Epheſian friends, who met him at Miletus, is not an ingredient in the pain, we now feel. *They* ſorrowed moſt of all, on account of his prophetic intimation, that they ſhould ſee his face no more. But *we*, my dear brethren, are permitted to hope we may ere long meet again on earth; and if ſome individuals ſhould be forbidden that pleaſure, may we look forward, with joy, to a better meeting in the realms of bliſs!

At preſent, let every painful idea of our temporary ſeparation be diſmiſſed from your thoughts, or, however, let it only be ſo far realized, as to give an increaſing weight to thoſe truths, which may be recommended to your notice; as I would wiſh to make uſe of this detached expreſſion, only as a memorial, to impreſs your minds with ſuch advice,

advice, as I conceive to be moſt ſeaſonable and important.

If it ſeems needful more expreſly to juſtify this application of the apoſtle's words, let me

FIRST, requeſt your attention to ſome brief introductory remarks.

Conſtant *watchfulneſs* is the duty of all Chriſtians. None of us are exempted from an obligation to attend to this charge. Our bleſſed Lord, while he was upon earth, often repeated it to his diſciples, inforcing it by various motives; and expreſly declaring, "What I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all, *Watch*."* And the Apoſtle, who here enjoined watchfulneſs on the Epheſian elders, gave a ſimilar exhortation to private Chriſtians; as in his firſt letter to the Church at Corinth,† "*Watch* ye, ſtand faſt in the faith." And Peter interſperſes the like injunctions in his epiſtles. "*Watch* unto prayer:" "Be ſober, be *vigilant*, becauſe your adverſary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour."‡ Thus alſo, in the laſt book of the ſacred canon, the angel of the Church of Sardis is charged, by him, whoſe eyes are as a flame of fire, to "Be *watchful*, and ſtrengthen the things



* Matt. xxiv. 42. xxv. 13. Mark xiii. 33, 35, 37. † xvi. 13. ‡ 1. iv. 7. & v. 8.

which remain, that are ready to die ;" &c. while it is added, by way of ſolemn warning, " If thou ſhalt not *watch*, I will come unto thee, as a thief," &c.* Whereas in a following page we are aſſured by the ſame authority, " Bleſſed is he, that *watcheth*, and keepeth his garments," &c.† It appears then, that watchfulneſs is our indiſpenſible duty, neceſſary at all ſeaſons, through the whole of the Chriſtian life. It is found needful, when we firſt ſet out in the ways of God; nor can it be ſafely neglected by the moſt advanced Chriſtian, who is approaching to the cloſe of his warfare. As your ſincere friend, as a miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt, as one, who has been for ſo many years the paſtor of your own choice, you will not diſpute the propriety of my adopting this part of the apoſtle's final charge, WATCH!

" *Remember*" alſo ſaid Paul, " how, for ſo long a ſpace I ceaſed not to warn you." And in the ſame diſcourſe he beſought them to " *Remember* the words of the Lord Jeſus," which he had mentioned to them, while he labored among them. And thus Peter told thoſe, who under his miniſtry had been " called to glory and virtue,"‡ " I will not be negligent to put you always in *remembrance* of theſe things, though ye know them" already, " and be eſtabliſhed in the preſent truth. Yea," he adds, " I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle,

* Rev. iii. 2. 3. † xvi. 15. ‡ 2. i. 3.

tabernacle, to ſtir you up, by putting you in *remembrance.*" And, "moreover I will endeavour, that ye may be able, after my deceaſe, to have theſe things in *remembrance.** The connection of theſe two duties is apparent, not only from the words of our text, but from the charge given to the angel of the Church at Sardis by him who holdeth the ſeven ſtars in his hand. "*Remember* how thou haſt received, and heard; and hold faſt and repent;"† which is followed by the threatning againſt unwatchfulneſs, that was cited before. From all which I infer, that the remembrance of paſt admonitions and occurrences is ſuited to ſtimulate us to proper watchfulneſs. And as they, whoſe minds are already purified by the knowledge of the truth, need to have them "ſtirred up by way of remembrance;"‡ ſo I am perſuaded, I need no apology for reminding you, that paſt inſtructions and warnings, as well as paſt profeſſions, and experiences, dangers and deliverances, ſhould be carefully improved, as motives to induce you to "watch always," that you may eſcape thoſe things, which would be prejudicial to your ſouls; that you may be found daily waiting for your Lord; and may adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things. I proceed therefore to what I had mainly in view.



* 2. i. 12, 13, 15. † Rev. iii. 3. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 1.

SECONDLY, To apply this ſolemn charge, particularly to profeſſed Chriſtians, with relation to their moſt important concerns.

Suffer, my deareſt brethren, a threefold application of this intereſting memento;

*Watch and remember.*

I. With reference to the *articles of your* FAITH.

I am aware that may would overlook, and ſome entirely reprobate this idea; they would condemn me for laying any ſtreſs upon the ſentiments, you embrace; and God forbid I ſhould encourage you to ſatisfy yourſelves with mere ſpeculations in religion, without an anſwerable effect upon your hearts and lives. But if any would infer from hence, that it is no matter what notions of Chriſtianity we entertain, an attention to the context, eſpecially the preceding verſe, and a careful peruſal of Paul's epiſtles, particularly that to the Churches of Galatia, muſt abundantly manifeſt that he was not of their mind. A wiſe writer had obſerved long before, "That the ſoul be without knowledge is not good;"* and one greater than Solomon has charged us, "take heed what ye hear,"† and has promiſed it as an important bleſſing,

* Prov. xix. 2. † Mark iv. 24.

ſing, that "If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."* The ſame divine perſonage prayed that his people might be ſanctified by the truth,† averring the written word to be the ſtandard of truth. May you then, my beloved, "Buy the truth, and ſell it not."‡ But, be concerned to evidence that you are ſanctified by the truth; that every religious principle, you embrace, makes you the more concerned to be holy in all manner of converſation and godlineſs; knowing that "we are never well informed of the truth, till we are conformed to the truth."

I readily and heartily adviſe you, to *watch* againſt a ſpirit of dogmatical arrogance and bigotry. *Remember* you are far from infallibility, or perfection in knowledge; and others have an equal right of private judgment with yourſelves. Make not a man an offender for a word,§ eſpecially beware, leſt you do ſo, merely becauſe he is your reprover, and lays down rules too ſtrict to ſuit your inclinations. They, who have the moſt partial and ſuperficial acquaintance with religious truth, are commonly the moſt conceited and cenſorious. A more thorough knowledge of evangelical principles will promote humility, and check a captious and cavilling ſpirit. It will induce us to acknowledge frankly our own ignorance, and fallibility, and teach

* John vii. 17. † John xvii. 17. ‡ Prov. xxiii. 23. § Iſai. xxix. 21.

teach us not to ſcorn others, even though we are perſuaded their ſentiments are erroneous, but to pity their miſtakes, and endeavour in meekneſs to inſtruct them.—At the ſame time, I exhort you to *watch* againſt a ſceptical, unſettled diſpoſition; that you may not be of the number of thoſe, who are "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth;"* or, who are "carried about with every wind of doctrine, through the cunning craftineſs of men, who lie in wait to deceive."† I wiſh you ever to *remember* the importance of truth, and to ſeek for it as for hid treaſure. "Call no man father upon earth," but, at the ſame time, remember you have "one maſter even Chriſt."‡ Theſe two moſt conſiſtent maxims are by ſome put aſunder, but they are connected by the higheſt authority; yet, ſome zealous advocates for the right of private judgment, have inconſiderately pleaded for the innocence of error. As if, it were no matter what people think, concerning religion, if they do but think for themſelves. But if error is neither criminal nor noxious, and we are not accountable to God for our thoughts of him, or our rejection of his word, ſurely there is not much need to contend about the right of private judgment; we may, in that caſe, let ſynods, or prelates, or even the Pope himſelf, think for us, and ſo avoid the trouble of ſearching for ourſelves, after that, which is of no importance, whether we miſs,

* 2 Tim. iii. 7. † Eph. iv. 14. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 9, 10. Joh. xiii. 13.

miſs it or find it. But ye, my brethren, have not ſo learned Chriſt; may you continue carefully to inveſtigate, and faithfully to retain, the truth, as it is in Jeſus.

I wiſh you, indeed, to *watch* againſt a ſpirit of boundleſs curioſity, and a fond love of novelty; *remember* you are warned not to affect to be wiſe above what is written, or to "intrude into things, that are unſeen, being vainly puffed up by a carnal mind:"* but, at the ſame time, *watch* againſt a lazy indifference reſpecting a progreſſive acquaintance with the things of God. May you ever *remember* that the bible contains an unexhauſted mine of religious knowledge, which you have not yet explored. May you aſpire after a more extenſive and intimate acquaintance with revealed truth, that you "may be able to comprehend with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulneſs of God," † Brethren, let "the word of Chriſt dwell in you richly, in all wiſdom." ‡ Be anxious to become mighty in the ſcriptures; not confining all your learning to a little contracted creed, containing only four or five favorite points, which you would force a future miniſter to find in every text he preaches from; while he overlooks a hundred other articles of equal

* Col. ii. 18. † Eph. iii. 18, 19. ‡ Col. iii. 6.

equal importance. But be desirous of knowing all, that God has inserted in his holy word. There is room for you to increase in divine knowledge, as long as you live, and, I suppose, to all eternity. May God send you a minister who, like a faithful and good steward, shall bring " out of his treasure things new and old."*

I trust you will continue to *watch* against all notions, that flatter human pride, and that encourage the idea of merit in a sinner. May you ever *remember*, that the design of God in the gospel is, to abase all the haughtiness of man, that his free grace may be exalted as the only source of a sinner's salvation, which is declared to be " not of works, lest any man should boast."†—And may you *watch* equally against sentiments, which tend to encourage licentiousness or sloth. *Remember* it is Christ's design to bring apostate creatures back to God.‡ " He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.§" Shew that you are as zealous for the performance of good works, as you are against the notion of meriting eternal happiness by them. Thus shall you appear to be God's " Workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

* Matt. xiii. 52. † Eph. ii. 9. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 16. § Titus ii. 14.

them."§ *Remember* that you muſt live and die, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life."† For verily he that will judge us at the laſt day, has declared, "Whoſoever will not receive the kingdom of God" gratuitouſly, "as a little child" receives his inheritance, who cannot pretend to have merited, earned or purchaſed it, "he ſhall not enter therein."‡ But *remember* alſo, a meetneſs for the inheritance of the ſaints in light, is no leſs neceſſary than a title to it. And "holineſs" is that, "without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord."§

*Watch*, my dearly beloved, againſt all ſentiments, that oppoſe God's moral Government, and make void his Law;‖ either by repreſenting the *unregenerate* as fallen *below* all obligations to any thing ſpiritually good; or the *regenerate*, as raiſed *above* every idea of duty. *Remember* that the Law of God, is too "holy, juſt and good"¶ to admit of any abrogation or abatement. It is the unalterable ſtandard of rectitude, by which every diſpoſition and action muſt be examined. *Remember* that it is "*ſpiritual*"* taking cognizance of the ſprings of action, and demanding the whole heart for God. Therefore it is by an acquaintance with the extent, ſtrictneſs, ſpirituality and equity of the divine law, that you muſt learn your guilt and danger; the impoſſibility

* Eph. ii. 10. † Jude 21. ‡ Mark x. 15. § Heb. xii. 14.
‖ Pſ. cxix. 126. ¶ Rom. vii. 12. * Rom. vii. 14.

poſſibility of being juſtified by imperfect obedience; your need of Chriſt; and the vaſt extent of your obligations to him. "I had not known ſin but by the law," ſaid the apoſtle; and he lays it down as a general rule, that "by the law is the knowledge of ſin;"† obſerving that "the law was our ſchool-maſter, to bring us to Chriſt."‡ By this mean the Spirit of God convinces ſinners that they need a better righteouſneſs than their own; while he ſhews them that it was not the fault of the *law* that it could not give them life, but *their* fault in not complying with its righteous demands. Thus they are induced to juſtify God, and condemn themſelves. For none but "Carnal minds" will indulge "Enmity againſt the law;"§ Renewed ſouls "delight" therein "after the inner man."‖ But it is impoſſible that *he*, who continues blind to the equity of God's *claims* on his creatures, and of his *charges* againſt ſinners, ſhould diſcern his need of Chriſt, and the beauty of the way of ſalvation by him. Or if he ſhould admit, that the law demands of poor fallen creatures, only ſuch external ſuperficial obedience, as their carnal hearts, duly terrified, can be induced to yield, inſtead of ſupreme love to God, and entire conformity to his will; certainly ſuch a perſon can ſee but little need of Chriſt; he will barely conceive that he has a few ſmall ſins, for which ſome atonement may have been

* Rom. vii. 7. † Rom. iii. 20. ‡ Gal. iii. 24. § Rom. viii. 7.
‖ Rom. vii. 22.

een neceſſary; but if he ſuppoſes they are for-
iven him for Chriſt's ſake, ſtill he will ſee cauſe,
nly for a little love and gratitude*. Doubtleſs,
f a man conceives that he never really deſerved
eath himſelf, he will be unable to diſcern much
wiſdom, juſtice, or goodneſs, in the infliction of
eath on another, as his Subſtitute. Therefore have
ſo often reminded you, brethren, of what ſeems
o me almoſt a ſelf-evident axiom, that there can
e no more of *grace*, in our Salvation, than there
would have been of *juſtice* in our Condemnation.
Conſequently, if the Miniſtration of Condemna-
tion be not admitted to be glorious, neither can
the goſpel appear to exceed in glory, as the Mini-
ſtration of Righteouſneſs†. If the death of the
original offenders would have been a reproach to
God's government, the Death of his Son, in their
place, muſt have been more ſo, by ten thouſand
degrees. Let no man deceive you with vain words.
He that continues to hate that picture, which God
gave of himſelf on Mount Sinai, does not under-
ſtand, or cannot love, the brighter diſplay of his
glorious character on Mount Calvary.

While I warn you againſt every thought, that
would impeach the equity of the divine *Government*,
I would equally caution you to reject every idea,
that would militate againſt the ſovereign freeneſs
of *Grace*. From the free and ſelf-moved goodneſs



* Luke vii. 47. † 2 Cor. iii. 9.

of Jehovah your whole ſalvation took its riſe. It was indeed impoſſible for you to know your intereſt in everlaſting, electing love, till the effects of that love made it manifeſt. But theſe being truly experienced by you, you may with propriety trace your ſalvation up to its primary ſource, and ſhould acknowledge with humility and gratitude, that God had "from the beginning choſen you to ſalvation, through ſanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."* Surely it was becauſe God had loved you "with an everlaſting love," that he drew you with his loving kindneſs to himſelf.† May you ever *remember* how expreſsly and repeatedly the ſcripture affirms, that it is, "by grace ye are ſaved."‡ "By grace, through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God."‡ He, that is not willing to be indebted to ſpontaneous mercy for his whole ſalvation, is guilty of the higheſt pride, and moſt aggravated ingratitude. Unleſs we are brought with humility and thankfulneſs, to attribute our eternal happineſs to the riches of unmerited grace, we cannot be fit to join the ſociety, and unite in the ſong, of the redeemed. All, that have been tranſlated from this world to the realms of bliſs, unite in celebrating the ſovereign love of God, and the redeeming blood of the Lamb, and never ſhall that chorus be interrupted by one diſſenting voice.



* 2 Theſſ. ii. 13. † Jer. xxxi. 3. ‡ Eph. ii. 5, 8.

I entreat you to *watch* againſt degrading ideas of the perſon of CHRIST. *Remember* he is the only foundation of a ſinner's hope; and the efficacy of his atoning ſacrifice depends on the dignity of his Perſon, as "God over all, bleſſed for ever."* For we are aſſured "it was not poſſible that the blood of bulls, and of goats, ſhould take away ſins;"† but it is aſſerted by Paul, juſt before our text, that "God has purchaſed the church with his own blood."‡ Surely, when the great Lawgiver had threatened man with death, in caſe of tranſgreſſion, if he had accepted of a ſacrificed *brute*, as the final ſubſtitute for the ſinner, ſuch a ſalvo would never have been to the honor of his juſtice and veracity. It would not have clearly exhibited that diſpleaſure againſt moral evil, which the original threatning appeared to expreſs. Rather it muſt have been conſidered as a forcible evidence that God was *not* ſo much diſpleaſed with ſin in reality, as the penalty of the law had ſeemed to imply. Hence, though the antient ſacrifices moſt uſefully prefigured that atonement, which of themſelves they could not accompliſh; it was neceſſary that our guilt ſhould be expiated by an offering far ſuperior to them all, in intrinſic value, and excellence. No leſs a perſon than the incarnate Son of God, who became, for this purpoſe, "obedient unto death,"§ and laid down "his life a ranſom for many,"‖ was

 able

* Rom. ix. 5. † Heb. x. 4. ‡ Ver. 28. § Phil. ii. 8.
‖ John x. 11, 15, 18. Matt. xx. 28.

able to render the ſalvation of ſinners perfectly conſiſtent with the divine glory, and with the good of the univerſal empire of God. But we have "a great high prieſt, higher than the heavens,"* who hath "obtained eternal redemption for us, by his own blood;"† and are aſſured by the teſtimony of God himſelf, that "the blood of Jeſus Chriſt his Son cleanſeth us from all ſin."‡—"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, conſider the apoſtle and high prieſt of our profeſſion, CHRIST JESUS."§ May you often dwell with aſtoniſhment and delight on the greatneſs and dignity of your Redeemer. Conſider how infinitely rich he was, who "for your ſakes became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich."‖ Though he once appeared in the "form of a ſervant,"¶ he previouſly, yea from all eternity ſubſiſted in the form of God. Join not, my beloved friends, in the ungrateful ſurmiſe, becauſe he was "found in faſhion as a Man," and appeared in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, for the moſt benevolent purpoſe, that therefore he has no claim to any higher character than that of a fallible, peccable man. If you give up the idea of the Divinity of our Saviour, and retain a juſt ſenſe of the evil of ſin, you muſt ſink into deſpair. But ordinarily they, who deny the Deity of our Lord, treat Sin as a little evil. Thus they detract as much

* Heb. vii. 26. † Heb. ix. 12. ‡ Heb. iii. 4. § 2 Cor. viii. 9.
‖ Phil. ii. 6, 7. ¶ Gal. iii. 10.

much from the honor of the ſupreme Lawgiver, as they do from that of the divine Redeemer. For if the curſe of the law was not due to ſin, or if that curſe does not imply eternal miſery, the importance of ſupporting the honor of the law is not ſo great as you have hitherto believed. But if the curſe of the law is juſtly due to every one "who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;"* and if that curſe includes "everlaſting puniſhment,"† which is ſurely infinitely dreadful; then, ſin is practically declared, by the Governor of the Univerſe to be an infinite evil, in his ſight. And if, "Chriſt has redeemed us from this curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us,"‡ we have abundant reaſon to conſider his compaſſion for ſinners, and his zeal for the honor of the law, as ſuperlatively great, and his obedience unto death, which entitles *them* to Heaven, whoſe *perſonal deſert*, was Hell, muſt have been divinely meritorious; and was ſtamped with unſpeakable worth, ariſing from the infinite dignity of his perſon. But if we are utterly miſtaken in ſuppoſing ſo Great a Savior neceſſary; doubtleſs, Sin is not ſo Great an Evil;§ nor the honor of God's Law of ſo great

 conſequence;

* Gal. iii. 10. † Matt. xxv. 46. ‡ Gal. iii. 13.

§ This I conceive, with Dr. Bellamy, to be the great reaſon, which has induced ſo many nominal Chriſtians, to give up the divinity of Chriſt. Their inward thought is, that there was no need that the Creator of the univerſe ſhould become incarnate, and die on the croſs for them. They were not ſo bad, nor ſin ſo great an evil, as to make ſuch an atonement needful." *Bellamy on the Divinity of Chriſt*, 26.

conſequence; nor our obligations to obey it equ
to our apprehenſions of them; and conſequentl
we muſt give up the character of the ſupreme Law
giver; or at leaſt detract as much from it, as w
do from that of the Mediator; and renounce ou
firſt principle of the infinite Lovelineſs of the d
vine Nature, on which the whole connection
our religious principles depends. Thus you ſee
my brethren, that he who "honoreth not the Son
honoreth not the FATHER, who ſent him."* H
not only detracts infinitely from the Father
"love" in giving "his only begotten Son,"
ſave ſinners; but detracts from the dignity, autho
rity, glory, and amiableneſs of the divine charac
ter. *Watch* againſt ſuch degrading ſentiments
the God of grace and of juſtice. *Remember* tha
Law and Goſpel ſtand, or fall together. "Whoſ
denieth the Son, the ſame hath not the Father
but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Fa
ther alſo. Let that therefore abide in you, whic
ye have heard from the beginning. If that, whic
ye have heard from the beginning ſhall remain
you, ye alſo ſhall continue in the Son, and in th
Father."†

It is equally needful that I ſhould exhort you
brethren, to *watch* againſt the denial of the Perſo
nality, Divinity, and effectual operations of th
HOLY SPIRIT. *Remember* that the Applicatio

* John v. 23. † 1 John ii. 23, 24.

of redemption is no leſs neceſſary than its Impetration; and as our *guilt* could be removed by none, but a divine Redeemer, ſo our *depravity* cannot be ſubdued, but by a divine Sanctifier.—Formerly, ſome oppoſers of the ſcripture doctrine of the Holy Spirit, admitted his Perſonality, tho' they denied his Divinity, and conſidered him as a created Spirit. Now it is more common to deny his Perſonality, and conſider him only as a figurative perſon; and generally the ſame people deny his ſpecial, diſcriminating, efficacious operations. Have ſo many of you then, my brethren, as have been baptized into the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, been baptized into the name of God, and a good man, and an allegorical, imaginary Being, a mere property of God, or a poetic fiction? Or, did you not, in that ſolemn act of worſhip, devote yourſelves to the living and true God, as ſubſiſting in three diſtinct Perſons?—Or ſhall it be allowed that theſe diſtinct names were uſed, merely to ſpecify the ſame perſon, as executing different Offices, or acting under ſeveral Characters? When our Lord promiſed his diſciples that he "would pray the Father to give them another Comforter, that ſhould abide with them for ever," and explained himſelf as meaning the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would ſend in Chriſt's name; can ſuch expreſſions be made to accord with the denial of any perſonal diſtinctions

in

in the DEITY?* Or what is the amount of all theſe ſeemingly great and precious promiſes, concerning the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, whoſe gracious preſence is repreſented as equivalent to all good,† if the SPIRIT is no intelligent agent, but a mere figure of ſpeech, denoting the general tendency of Providence to promote moral goodneſs? —Did not you, beloved, in your Baptiſm, recognize your obligations to the HOLY SPIRIT, as well as to the FATHER and the SON? Is it not the SPIRIT that quickeneth your ſouls? Did he not raiſe you up from that ſpiritual and ſinful death, in which you were once involved? Was not the exceeding greatneſs of divine power as truly diſplayed in your ſpiritual reſurrection, as in raiſing the body of our Lord from the dead?† Such

* One man may ſuſtain three diſtinct characters, as it is well known to be the caſe with the king, under whoſe government we live; but could we reconcile it with common ſenſe, for our monarch to uſe ſuch language as this, "I the king of Ireland, will deſire the king of England, to ſend the elector of Hanover, to ſupply the want of my preſence with my people."

† Epheſ. i. 17.—20.

N. B. The doctrine of divine influence is objected to by ſome, as implying a ſupernatural and miraculous change, in all thoſe that are ſaved. We admit that every converſion is a miracle of mercy; and if the miracle of Chriſt's incarnation is admitted, why ſhould we object to the ſuppoſition that Chriſt is formed in the heart by miraculous influence? It is pretended this would be a frequent deviation from the laws of nature, but I know not by what law the Moſt High has been precluded from any immediate interpoſition to ſave his ruined creatures from deſtruction. The neceſſity of this interpoſition is proved by awful fact. Sin has involved the moral world in the moſt *unnatural* confuſion and miſery. Surely if the like confuſion had actually taken place in the natural world; if the planetary ſyſtem had broken the laws of nature; or if a comet had drawn aſide our earth from her orbit, (as Satan ſeduced mankind to violate the law of God) and if our globe were in danger of ruſhing into central flames, or of fly-

Such is the repreſentation given by the apoſtle. And you, who have been convinced of the total depravity of your native diſpoſition, will not refuſe to ſubſcribe to the humbling truth. The ſcripture evidence of this doctrine is abundant; and none of the ſelf-ſtiled rationaliſts will be able to prove it unreaſonable to believe, that depravity may be ſo great as to need Almighty Influence to ſubdue it; nor can they prove it unreaſonable to believe, that God is able to change the moſt ſtubborn heart, and effectually to incline the moſt obſtinate ſinner to return to himſelf; nor yet that it is irrational to belive, that God ſhould claim, and exerciſe a right to exert this influence, when, and where, he pleaſes, leaving whom he will to follow the dictates of his own depraved inclinations, and converting whom he pleaſes to himſelf. May you ever humbly confeſs, that as the wind bloweth where it liſteth, and we evidently perceive its effects, while the cauſe can only be reſolved into the ſovereign will of the Almighty, "ſo is every one, that is born of the Spirit."* You, who have received Chriſt Jeſus, being made "willing in the day of his power,"† were born, not of blood, nor of

ing off from the center of the ſyſtem into outer darkneſs; in ſuch a caſe, it would be horrid bigotry to the laws of nature, to object to the interpoſition of Almighty Goodneſs to reſtore her to her proper place.—Brethren, never give up the doctrine of efficacious grace, till you can find clear proof of the exiſtence of a law of nature ſufficient to bring a ſinner back to God.

* John iii. 8. † Pſ. cx. 3. † Compare Matt. vii. 12. with Luke xi. 13.

of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* May you humbly acknowledge that it is *of God* you are in Christ Jesus,† it was by divine influence your hearts were first united to him; and still, "it is God, who worketh in you to will and to do according to his good pleasure."‡

At the same time I beseech you in the Name of the Lord JESUS, and by the love of the SPIRIT,‖ that you *watch* against the abuse of those important doctrines, on which I have been insisting. In vain do you profess that Christ is your only foundation, unless you actually build upon him; and you must be careful that your superstructure is suited to the foundation. Be careful that you depend on Christ alone, and that the sincerity of your faith be made apparent by a life of holiness. *Remember* that the foundation, which God hath laid, is adapted to sustain an holy temple, the habitation of God through the Spirit,§ and no other kind of building will accord therewith. And even he who actually makes use of the right foundation, and does build thereon, will yet suffer loss, if the whole of his materials are not of the right kind.¶ Try all your sentiments, and all your experience, and your whole practice, carefully, and frequently, by the unerring standard of the divine word.—And, in like manner, as to the

* John i. 13. † Cor. i. 30. ‡ Phil. ii. 12. ‖ Rom. xv. 30. § Eph. ii. 21, 22. ¶ 1 Cor. iii. 10—15.

the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, I entreat you to *watch* leſt you abuſe the doctrine of efficacious grace, by indulging an idea that it claſhes with the doctrine of obligation, that it ſupercedes all duty, and neceſſity of holy activity; or that it renders the uſe of warnings and exhortations abſurd. *Remember* that the intent of divine influence is, not to render means *uſeleſs*, but to render them *effectual*. Your obligations to duty are not the reſult of ſpecial grace, though your compliance with thoſe obligations muſt be aſcribed to that grace. The operations of the HOLY SPIRIT are not perceivable, but by their effects, if you were to wait, till you knew you had experienced them, before you performed any duty; or if miniſters were to wait till that time, before they exhorted you to that duty; *you* muſt exclude all ſenſe of obligation; and *they* muſt be precluded from all uſe of exhortation. It would be very diſhonorable to the doctrine of grace, and exceedingly prejudicial to your beſt intereſts, for you to indulge an opinion that nothing ought to be conſidered as duty, but what the Spirit of God actually inclines you to perform. Such a ſentiment, indeed, has ſeldom been expreſsly avowed, but it has been too often admitted by implication, and is the real ground upon which ſo many cavil at the uſe of ſuch addreſſes and exhortations, as the holy ſcriptures abundantly employ. I fear the

principal

principal uſe, ſome perſons have made of the doctrine of the Spirit's work, has been to blunt the edge of the moſt ſcriptural reproofs and expoſtulations. They *talk* of HIS *work*, but they hardly want HIM to *do* any thing more than *themſelves*, who love to do nothing that is irkſome to the fleſh, and deſire the Spirit to whiſper peace, peace, while they lie on the bed of ſloth and indulgence. Beloved, *remember* that they are the beſt friends to the work of the Spirit, who are earneſtly concerned to be filled with his fruits.*

In fine, *watch*, I pray you againſt all ſentiments, that would leſſen your abhorrence of ſin, prevent holy joy in God, or make you careleſs of your moral conduct. *Remember*, he, who hath delivered us from the curſe of the law, hath not leſſened our obligations to obedience. He came not to ſave his people from their duty, but from their ſins. You are "not without law unto God, but are under the law to Chriſt."† *Watch* againſt error on the right hand and on the left. *Remember*, what was lately obſerved concerning the *narrow way*,‡ it does not lie by the ſide of a ſteep rock, ſo that if you guard againſt danger on one ſide, you cannot get into danger on the other. There are extremes on both ſides, which would prove very injurious to your ſouls.—I have thro' greateſt

* Gal. v. 22. † 1 Cor. ix. 21. ‡ Matt. vii. 14

greateſt part of this diſcourſe, attempted to guard you againſt miſtakes on either hand, which I have claſſed in a ſort of contraſt. *Watch* and pray, leſt you enter into temptation. May God lead you on, in the way of truth and holineſs. Think not that the *Promiſe of Perſeverance* ſuperſedes the *Duty of Perſevering*. Shew that you love the truth more than a miſer loves his money: that you long for an increaſing acquaintance with the whole revelation of God; and may "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jeſus our Lord."* You will not be ſo unjuſt as to ſuſpect me of denying all thoſe doctrines, which I could not crowd into a ſingle diſcourſe. I may call you to witneſs, that according to my ability "I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of God."† But what has been delivered muſt ſuffice as a ſpecimen of the application of this charge to the doctrines of Chriſtianity, we ſhall reſume the text in the afternoon, and apply it to more experimental and practical ſubjects.—

* 2 Pet. i. 2. † Acts xx. 27.

# SERMON II.

Acts XX. 31.

WATCH AND REMEMBER.

ONCE more, my dear friends, let me requeſt your candid attention to this intereſting charge. You cannot ſuppoſe that it is leſs needful for the members of this Chriſtian Society, than it was for the elders of one of the primitive Churches. I attempted in the morning to apply it as a caution againſt errors in *doctrine*, and as an exhortation to continue ſteadfaſt in the faith; let me now proceed to apply it,

II. To Chriſtian EXPERIENCE.

All ſound Philoſophers, who are engaged in inveſtigating the various works of nature, profeſs to regard experimental knowledge, as that which is moſt valuable, and on which alone they can with ſafety depend. And ſurely it ought to be allowed

allowed a moſt rational concluſion, that there is no ſcience in which experience is of greater importance, than in religion. The moſt extenſive acquaintance with the doctrines of ſcripture, if it be merely ſpeculative, is no certain evidence of genuine piety; but if you ſo underſtand the truth, as to enter into the ſpirit of it, and have an anſwerable frame of heart, this is a bleſſed proof that you have been taught of God. "Such a ſpiritual acquaintance with the things of God, as implies an heart-felt ſenſe of their holy excellence, is often ſpoken of in his word, as what is peculiar to true ſaints. May you enjoy increaſing evidence that you have been thus favoured; and to that end may you frequently, and faithfully, examine what experience you have of the ſanctifying influence of the truth. Vital holineſs will undoubtedly influence the life, but its immediate ſeat is in "*the hidden man of the heart*,"* as it is ſtiled by the apoſtle Peter.

I begin, therefore, this branch of the ſubject with an earneſt admonition, that each of you would *watch* his OWN HEART. *Remember* the charge given by the wiſeſt of men, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iſſues of life."† As the health of our bodies muſt needs be affected by the ſtate of that internal muſcle, which is the fountain of circulation, whence the



* 1 Pet. iii. 4. † Prov. iv. 23.

blood is diffused to every member; so the conduct of our lives will be contaminated, or purified, according to the state of our inward affections and choice. In thus watching your own hearts, you will need the utmost precaution, and continual assistance from above; for you *remember* who hath warned you that "he, that trusteth his own heart is a fool:"* and the same infallible testimony hath taught you, that "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;"† so that God only can fully know it.

*Watch* then, my dear friends, against *hypocrisy* and *self-deception*. Too often have men under the masque of religion, wilfully attempted to deceive their fellow men; but it is much to be feared that self-deception is still more common, though it is the greatest folly, as well as dreadful wickedness. *Remember*, all my hearers, that God cannot be deceived, and "will not be mocked."‡ What then is the "hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained" some temporary credit, worldly advantage, or delusive ease, "when God shall take away his soul?"‖

*Watch* against *formality*, and *self-righteousness*, by which thousands, and tens of thousands, have been involved in eternal ruin. *Remember* as the antidote against the former, that God demands the

* Prov. xxviii. 26. † Jer. xvii. 9. ‡ Gal. vi. 7. ‖ Job xxvii.

the heart; nor can your profeſſed faith be genuine, unleſs it purifies the heart, and induces you to unite with Chriſt in the great ends of his redemption, and to devote yourſelves ſincerely to your Redeemer. *Remember* as a preſervative againſt ſelf-righteouſneſs, that "by the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified."* If God ſhould "mark iniquity,"† and deal with you according to your perſonal character and conduct, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, you could never ſtand before him. There is no acceptance for a ſinner, but "in the Beloved."‡ There is no ſafety for your ſouls, but in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. May you cordially abjure all dependance on your own obedience, which is too defective, and too defiled, to entitle you to the approbation of a holy and righteous God; and may you deſire with Paul to be "found" intereſted "*in him*,"‖ who "is the end of the law for righteouſneſs, to every one that believeth."§ For his "ſalvation ſhall be for ever, and his righteouſneſs ſhall not be aboliſhed."¶ *Watch* againſt the moſt ſecret workings of a ſelf-righteous ſpirit, and endeavour to realize, more and more, the greatneſs of your obligations to that bleſſed Immanuel, who, though he "knew no ſin" of his own, was "made ſin for" you, and treated as the worſt of criminals, that you "might be made the righteouſneſs of God



* Rom. iii. 20. † Pſ. cxxx. 3. ‡ Eph. i. 6. ‖ Phil. iii. 9. § Rom. x. 4. ¶ Iſa. lxi. 6.

in him,"* and be treated as though you had fully obeyed the law in your own persons; being in and through his "righteousness exalted,"† to everlasting dignity and glory.

*Watch*, all of you, that have made a profession of godliness, lest any one should be found to have only the *semblance of conversion*, and not really be "born of God." *Remember* that counterfeit graces will soon be detected. "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."‡ But "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are done away, all things are become new.‖" Examine yourselves" therefore "whether ye be in the faith prove your own selves; know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be" such as are "disapproved" of God.§ Try your faith and repentance, if they are genuine. I have often reminded you that the harmony of those two graces is one of the best proofs of the sincerity of each of them. If your faith puts an end to your repentance, it is a sign the latter was merely natural terror of conscience, and the former is abominable presumption. True faith will, at once, pacify and purify the conscience; and while it casts out tormenting dread of punishment, will humble the soul more deeply; increasing our hatred

* Gal. vi. 3. ‖ 2 Cor. v. 17. § 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

hatred of sin, and watchfulness against its solicitations.

Once more, *watch* against those partial DEFECTS, which too often attend the experience of true Christians. The *total* absence of any one grace is inconsistent with real godliness, and a defect in the *degree* of our graces attends every Christian in this life. But what I now intend to caution you against, is more than the ordinary deficiency of Christians in the present life, though not such an essential defect, as would prove the subject of it an hypocrite. It consists in that *want of proportion* in our views of divine things, and affections towards them, which is much greater in some Christians than in others; and which greatly impairs the beauty of true religion, whenever it takes place in a considerable degree.—*Remember* that God, in his word, has given his people the most lovely and consistent discoveries of all his glorious perfections. Every thing is there exhibited, that can excite our awe and veneration, and every thing that can encourage our hope, affection and gratitude. He appears in all the purity, rectitude and majesty of an omniscient Judge; and displays, at the same time the condescention and love of a gracious and tender Father. These different excellencies are so admirably adjusted in the divine word, that the one does not impair or eclipse the other; we have abundant reason to say with

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the Pſalmiſt, "My ſoul ſtandeth in *awe* of thy word," and yet "I *rejoice* in thy word as one that findeth great ſpoil."* But in our actual view of theſe divine glories, there is not always that charming proportion, which there is in the ſcriptures themſelves. Through the artifices of Satan, the injudicious management of miniſters, or the imperfection of our own minds, our attention may be ſo confined to one object, as unhappily to overlook another of equal conſequence. Various lamentable effects follow from ſuch defective views. For it is exceedingly needful for us to enjoy a proportionable manifeſtation of the divine excellencies. Elſe, if on the *one* hand, our view of the divine mercy and grace, and unchangeable love of GOD, be not attended with a proportionable ſenſe of his majeſty and Holineſs, this will tend to encourage carnal ſecurity, preſumption, and ſpiritual pride; as, on the *other* hand, a deep ſenſe of the greatneſs, terrible majeſty, and avenging juſtice of the MOST HIGH, if it be attended with a very defective view of his rich Grace, will tend to ſinful diſcouragement, unbelieving deſpondency and a ſpirit of bondage. We need therefore to watch againſt theſe defects on either hand, and to pray God to grant us ſuch diſcoveries of his juſtice and mercy, his holineſs and grace, his authority and gentleneſs, his majeſty and condeſcenſion, as ſhall at once encourage

* Pſ. cxix. 161. 162.

courage and attract our ſouls to himſelf, while they fill us with the deepeſt humility and reverence. And you ſhould pray much for Miniſters, that there may be in their preaching a proper *proportion* of caution and conſolation; of that, which tends to the deeper conviction and humiliation of their hearers, and of that, which tends to win and allure them to follow the Lord. I pray, beloved, that your experiences may be enlarged, and be well proportioned; that you may not ſuffer loſs, either through your having too little ſenſe of the divine purity, and reverence for the Majeſty of God; or through a defective acquaintance with the freeneſs of his Grace, and a want of holy confidence in Chriſt Jeſus the Lord.

*Watch* no leſs againſt thoſe corrupt MIXTURES, which ſometimes may attend the experiences of real Chriſtians. Alas! if we carefully examine the inward exerciſes of our minds, we ſhall not only perceive that the ſame perſons, who have been made partakers of a renewed nature, are ſtill infeſted with ſinful propenſities, and find a "law in their members," which warreth againſt the law of their minds,* ſo that they cannot do the things that they would;† but, in this preſent ſtate of imperfection, we ſhall detect various latent evils, frequently intermingling themſelves with our beſt ſervices, and tarniſhing our choiceſt experiences. It is not indeed

* Rom. vii. 22, 23. † Gal. v. 17.

indeed to be ſuppoſed, that true believers ever have in the preſent ſtate, any experiences that are perfectly pure and unmixed. That, which is *merely natural*, and too often, that, which is *ſinful* and *corrupt*, accompanies thoſe workings of the affections and powers of the ſoul, wherein the exerciſe of the divine life conſiſts. "The beam of divine "light," a judicious divine obſerves, "as it comes "from the fountain of light upon our hearts, is "pure; but as it is reflected back, it is mixed: "The ſeed as ſent from Heaven, and planted in "the heart, is pure; but as it ſprings out of the "heart, it is impure: Yea, there is commonly a "much greater mixture than moſt of us imagine. "So that I have often thought," ſaid that great man, "that the experiences of true Chriſtians too "frequently reſemble ſome ſorts of fruit, which "are inveloped in ſeveral coverings, of thick ſhells "or pods, which are thrown away by him, that "gathers the fruit, ſo that but a very ſmall part of "the whole bulk is the pure kernel that is good to "eat."*—It is particularly to be obſerved that, in the experiences of true believers, and even ſometimes in very high experiences, there is frequently a mixture of human affections, and natural paſſions. Hence it is, that the ſame views and diſcoveries will often greatly vary in their effects, on perſons of different natural conſtitutions. And even

* See Edwards's Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New-England, from page 158 to 167.

even the ſame perſon will be differently affected by the ſame manifeſtations of the divine truth at different times. On this account we cannot always judge of the degree of grace by its outward effects, or the viſible emotions of the paſſions. The *novelty* of the impreſſions, the late *tranſition* from diſtreſs and terror to hope and joy, and the bodily *conſtitution* itſelf, may occaſion ſome to expreſs their inward feelings, with greater ſenſibility than others. —Some perſons eſpecially, when their minds are greatly affected with religious truth, are very liable to have their *imaginations* greatly impreſſed with various external images and ideas of things. This may in part be the unavoidable conſequence of the preſent conſtitution of human nature; but if it be carried too far, and an improper ſtreſs be laid upon it, the effects may be very prejudicial.— But what is worſt of all is this, that many *ſinful* exerciſes of the heart may attend even the exerciſe of grace, eſpecially a degree of ſpiritual pride and ſelf-righteouſneſs; which therefore we need perpetually to guard againſt, even in the ſeaſons of our ſweeteſt enjoyments. Without great watchfulneſs we ſhall be in danger of being drawn off inſenſibly from confidence and joy in the Lord, to rejoice greatly in ourſelves, and our high privileges and attainments. Even Paul, after he had been caught up to the third heavens, was not exempt from this danger. And much more ſhall ſuch poor worms as we, be expoſed to it, if God

doth

doth not keep us continually by his Holy Spirit. So Peter mingled ſelf-confidence with his boldneſs for his Lord:* and James and John were not aware, when their zeal for their Maſter was mixed with unchriſtian bitterneſs.† As our humiliation is apt to be connected with ſinful dejection, ſo is our joy in God ſometimes tainted with ſelf-exaltation. The heathens fabled that one of their demi-gods, called Proteus, could transform himſelf into what ſhape he pleaſed; but corrupt ſelf-love and pride can appear in the human heart, in a greater variety of forms, than they attributed to him. *Remember* it is not your being aſſuredly right in one thing, that will prove you right in another. Your enjoying the exerciſe of grace will not prove that you are free from the partial influence of ſome corrupt principle, even at the ſame time. Watch, leſt love to the brethren be intermingled with party ſpirit; leſt your zeal be tainted with bitterneſs, your caution debaſed by worldly policy; or your courage in the cauſe of God, tinged with ſelf-confidence.

*Watch*, my deareſt brethren, againſt BACKSLIDING from God. Some few years after Paul had given this warning to the Elders of Epheſus, Chriſt himſelf charged them with having "left" their "firſt love."‡ Doubtleſs we have room, in our day, to lament that the "love of many waxes cold."

* Matt. xxvi. 33. † Luke ix. 55. ‡ Rev. ii. 4.

cold."‖ Alas, have none of you room to say, O that it were with us, as in months paſt! I would hope you are not as a collective body in a declining ſtate. I think there are ſome ſymptoms amongſt you of a more pleaſing nature. But is there no individual among you, of whom it may be ſaid, "Grey hairs,", the ſymptoms of declenſion "are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not?"* If it be ſo, may you hear the reproof of the head of the church, "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy firſt works." † Alas! ſhall I hear it at a diſtance, of ſome perſon whom I do not now ſuſpect, 'Such a one has forſaken our private meetings, having loved this preſent world;' —and again ſome months after, muſt another letter inform me;—'He continues to decline, and we find, is fallen into ſuch ſinful indulgencies, as will render it neceſſary for the church to cenſure him?'—Surely it is a godly jealouſy, and a knowledge of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, that makes me fear, leſt, if I live ſeven years in the weſtern part of the kingdom, my heart may be pained with ſome ſuch information. I pray God it may never be realized. But O! *remember*, one neglect leads to another, and God has threatened that "the backſlider in heart ſhall be filled with his own ways."‡ None of you ever heard me call in queſtion the Perſeverance of real ſaints; but we have no ground to believe the perſeverance of all profeſſors; and I



‖ Matt. xxiv. 12. * Hoſea vii. 9. † Rev. ii. 5. ‡ Prov xiv. 14.

muſt ſay, he that has not an habitual dread of partial backſliding, is, in all probability, one that is liable to total apoſtacy.

I hope better things of you, brethren, and ſuch as accompany ſalvation; but I muſt add once more, *watch* againſt the DEGENERATING of your experiences. If the *defects*, which I pointed out before, are not guarded againſt, and no care is taken to diſtinguiſh the genuine workings of grace from the corrupt *mixtures* that may attend them, there is a poſſibility for Chriſtians to grow worſe and worſe. Their defects will increaſe, till the ſymmetry and beauty of the Chriſtian character is almoſt deſtroyed; and yet, at the ſame time, they may not decline in their whole profeſſion, but the worſt part of their former experiences being miſtaken for the beſt, they may indulge enthuſiaſtic imaginations, and perhaps flatter themſelves with a notion that they have immediate revelations from Heaven; they may feel ſtrong affections and warm emotions of the paſſions, attended with much ſpiritual pride, and bitter zeal; and thus may ſhine and glitter in their own eyes, as if greater Chriſtians than ever, and like the poor Laodiceans, think that they are "rich, and increaſed in goods, and have need of nothing," when they are in reality miſerably deluded by ſatan, blinded by ſelf-love and prejudice, and made naked to their ſhame by their artful enemy. The lovely robe of humility is thrown

thrown off, the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit is loſt, the Spirit of God is grieved and withdrawn, and they are become a reproach to religion, and a ſtumbling block to their brethren. Yet a little Antinomian Leaven will make perſons in ſuch a ſtate deſpiſe all admonition and caution, and look down with contempt on all others, but thoſe of their own ſtamp, as ſtrangers to the liberty of the goſpel, and the power of religion. O! how ſad are the conſequences when a perſon, that hopefully began in the ſpirit, is thus made perfect by the fleſh. † We may well tremble, leſt it ſhould iſſue in his falling into open and ſcandalous immorality; dreadful darkneſs and deſpondency; or ſhould prove all his ſuppoſed paſt experience to have been hypocriſy and deluſion.

But I proceed now to apply the language of the text,

III. To your outward PRACTICE and viſible behavior before men.

Dear brethren, I entreat you, be *watchful* over the whole tenor of your lives. "Let your converſation be as it becometh the goſpel of Chriſt," that whether" I ſhould ſoon be permitted to "come to ſee you, or elſe" ſhould "be abſent" longer than I now expect, "I may hear of your affairs, that ye ſtand faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind, ſtriving



† Gal. iii. 3.

together for the faith of the gospel."* *Remember* that "the grace of God teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."† "*Wherefore* as obedient children, fashion not yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he, who hath called you, is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."‡ Remember that if the grace of God has changed the bias of your hearts, it will doubtless manifest its blessed influence in your lives. "Let your lights so shine before men, that they, beholding your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven."§ As you profess to be advocates for distinguishing grace, let its blessed effects appear undeniably. Much more, according to your professed expectation, has been done for you than for others around you; "What do you more than others?"‖ is therefore a most pertinent enquiry. I exhort you to *watch* over your tempers, appetites, affections and passions. Beware, lest any bodily appetite should betray any one of you into intemperance, whether openly to the reproach of religion, or ever so secretly. *Watch* against the beginnings of such temptations to useless and pernicious indulgences, which have sometimes grown upon professors, or ever they were aware. *Watch* against all unruly

* Phil. i. 27. † Titus ii. 12. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 14, 15, 16.
§ Matt. v. 16. ‖ Matt v. 47.

unruly desires, inordinate and idolatrous affections towards worldly possessions, or your dearest relations and friends. Whatever you make an idol of will be a cross to you, if you belong to God, and a curse to you if you do not. Study *relative duties.* Let husbands and wives shew, in their disposition and behaviour towards each other, a lively emblem of the connection between Christ and his Church. Let parents have their children in due subjection, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I entreat masters, and mistresses, and servants to remember the directions given to them by Paul and Peter, in the name of our Lord Jesus. ¶ "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger and clamor, and evil-speaking be put away from you with all malice."* These are "the things that become sound doctrine."† O that you may shew the soundness of your faith by the holiness of your lives. Shew that you love *universal holiness*; that is, that you wish to be conformed to Christ in every thing, wherein it is possible you should imitate him. If you "have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,"‡ as to manifest, your reception of him has been cordial and entire. "Let the same mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus."§ Remember, "He, that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."‖



¶ Eph. vi. Col. iii. iv. 1 Pet. ii. 18. * Eph. iv. 31.
† Titus, ii. 1. ‡ Colos. ii. 6. § Phil. ii. 5. ‖ 1 John ii. 6.

*Watch* over your conduct towards the ungodly, have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but rather reprove them."* "Walk honeſtly,"† and "in wiſdom ‡ towards them, that are without." Endeavour to give them the moſt juſt and amiable ideas of religion. While you dare not omit the moſt unfaſhionable and offenſive duties, ſee to it that you are not deficient in thoſe, that are generally more acceptable to all men. Shew, for inſtance that you are as ready to manifeſt juſtice and integrity in your dealings, and ſhew pity and compaſſion to the diſtreſſed, as ever you can be to reprove ſin, and ſeparate from the company of the ungodly. While you manifeſt a juſt abhorrence of all impiety, ſhew that you hate ſin worſt of all in yourſelves, and that you love the ſouls of your enemies, and would gladly do them any ſervice, as to the affairs of this life, when Providence affords you opportunity.

*Watch* your own conduct in the management of your ſecular concerns. Buy and ſell as in the fear of God. Be diligent in buſineſs, but "uſe the world as not abuſing it," remembring that, "the faſhion of this world paſſeth away."‖ "Love not the world, nor the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."§ If others purſue their preſent advantage

* Eph. v. 11. † 1 Th. iv. 12. ‡ Col. iv. 5. ‖ 1 Cor. vii. 31. § 1 John ii. 15.

tage by unſcriptural, unlawful means, ſee that you are able to ſay with Nehemiah, "So did not I, becauſe of the fear of God."* Never let the Name of Chriſt be reproached among thoſe, that make not a profeſſion of religion, through your miſconduct, injuſtice, unfaithfulneſs, and want of regard to your word. Either renounce Chriſt at once, or renounce the hidden things of diſhoneſty; for "no man can ſerve two maſters," and "ye cannot ſerve God and mammon."†

*Watch* your temper and conduct towards the enemies of religion. *Remember* "the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God."‡ Inſtruct oppoſers with meekneſs. "Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that diſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you;"‖ or who evidently would do ſo, if they had opportunity. Remember that the love of Chriſt in dying for you, conſidered in the character of enemies, has laid you under infinite obligations to be of a forgiving ſpirit towards the worſt of your enemies, and how much more towards any of your brethren, that may inadvertently offend you.

*Watch* particularly over your diſpoſition and behavior towards *each other*. Shew that you love all ſaints for the ſake of that holy image of God, which

* Neh. v. 15. † Matt. vi. 24. ‡ James i. 20. ‖ Matt. v. 44.

which is impreſſed upon them. Watch againſt a party ſpirit. Pray for the proſperity of the church univerſal, and ſhew that you greatly prefer the welfare of Zion to your private intereſt. But as your ſphere of action is neceſſarily confined, be particularly concerned for the cauſe of Chriſt in your own neighbourhood. "Let brotherly love continue"* and increaſe in this church. Let all your affairs be tranſacted in a ſpirit of love.† Remember, the vows of God are upon you. Reflect on the day, when after a profeſſion of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus, you entered into the bonds of Chriſtian fellowſhip, and lifted up your hand toward heaven, to give your aſſent to the *Church covenant*: you then promiſed in the ſtrength of Chriſt "to "walk together in an attendance on goſpel ordi- "nances, and in the diſcharge of all relative du- "ties, endeavouring to keep the unity of the "ſpirit in the bond of peace." Break not that ſolemn covenant. *Watch* careſully and tenderly over each other. Shew that you delight in one anothers welfare. Verily I think it were better a thouſand times to have no congregated church at all, than for church members not to be *evidently ſeparated* from the world, and *evidently united* together in love. *Remember*, Chriſt hath ſaid, "By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have love one to another."‡ But your love

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* Heb. xiii. † 1 Cor. xvi. 14. ‡ John xiii. 35.

to each other muſt be pure love, like that of your Lord, not leading you to ſuffer ſin in one another, and connive at that, which would diſhonor your bleſſed Lord. Let your love rather be diſcovered by your "exhorting one another daily, while it is called, to day; leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin."* "Conſider one another to provoke unto love and to good works."† Looking diligently, leſt any man fail of the grace of God: leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."‡ Let your Church-Meetings, your Prayer-Meetings, your Experience-Meetings be carefully attended. If ſome of you have neglected them for a long time, and could not be prevailed upon of late to "do your firſt works," let my putting requeſt induce you to ſeek the Lord with your brethren in thoſe ſocial opportunities, which you once uſed to attend, when it was better with you then it is now.

Finally, brethren, *watch* againſt all earthly-mindedneſs, and a worldly ſpirit; and *remember* that your citizenſhip is in heaven.‖ "The end of all things is at hand, be ye ſober and watch unto prayer."§ "Set your affections upon things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Chriſt in God; and

* Heb. iii. 13. † Heb. x. 24. ‡ Heb. xii. 15.

‖ Phil. iii. 20. πολιτευμα jus civitatis. § 1 Pet. iv. 7.

and when Chriſt, who is our life ſhall appear, then ſhall ye alſo appear with him in glory."* Live here as "ſtrangers and pilgrims;"† as ſuch, who cannot reſt in a polluted world, but who are ſeeking "a city, that hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God."‡ Comfort one another with the proſpect of being "for ever with the Lord."‖ Look forward with rejoicing to "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jeſus Chriſt:"§ Who "ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day."¶ May it *then* be manifeſted that you have *now* cordially received the divine teſtimony, concerning the Redeemer, which has been ſo often publiſhed to you within theſe walls: may you be acknowledged to be the Lord's "in the day that he maketh up his jewels:"* and in the mean time, as long as we ſojourn upon earth, I would "pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the work of faith with power: that the Name of our Lord Jeſus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt."† Amen.

* Col. iii. 2—4. † 1 Pet. ii. 11. ‡ Heb. xi. 10 ‖ Theſſ. iv. 17, 8. § Tit. ii. 13. ¶ Theſſ. i. 10. * Mal. iii. 17. † 2 Theſſ. i. 11, 12.

# THE EVENING DISCOURSE.

## Acts XX. 26.

### PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN.

BRETHREN! I requeſt you to unite with me in meditating upon this expreſſion of the apoſtle, which I have ſelected from the ſame diſcourſe, from whence I took my text in the former parts of the day. I am aſſured that I have not fixed upon this ſentence with a view to magnify myſelf, or that miniſtry, which I have exerciſed in this place; it will be three and twenty years next month, ſince I have been conſtantly employed therein, almoſt every ſabbath. But it is with a deſire to cloſe my *ſtated* labors with a ſevere examination of my own conduct; and to make one effort more toward the imitation of the apoſtle's example. And O! that I may not only eſcape the awful guilt of being acceſſary to *your* deſtruction,

deſtruction, but may it pleaſe the God of all grace to render me inſtrumental, at laſt, to the ſalvation of ſome, who have often heard me in vain.

Happy Paul! Who could ſay, when he took leave of his Epheſian friends, "I take you to record this day that I am *pure from the blood of all.*" Death may well be welcome to the preacher, who can make the ſame appeal. May I thus finiſh my courſe with joy!

But at preſent, let us examine the *import* of this expreſſion.—The language of the apoſtle undoubtedly has reference to men's *ſpiritual* concerns, and does not relate to his forbearing to do any injury to their *bodily* lives. It is true, there was a time, when Paul, then commonly known by the name of Saul, was not free in that ſenſe from the blood of all men. He was ſtained with the blood of the ſaints. He was acceſſary to the death of Stephen; and continued for ſome time after to breathe out threatnings and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of Jeſus. But he had long ſince been acquainted with him, who came, not to deſtroy men's lives, but to ſave their ſouls. And now the "weapons of his warfare" were changed. They were "not carnal," though they were "mighty through God" the Spirit.* Being affectionately deſirous of the ſalvation of ſouls, his great concern

was

* 2 Cor. x. 4.

was to preach Christ, and in his name to "perſuade men"* to be reconciled unto God.

Theſe words however, taken in their connection, imply, that if Paul had acted as a public teacher of religion, yea though he had called it Chriſtian religion, and had in that character taught doctrines eſſentially different from what he did teach; or, if he had taught the ſame doctrines, but with a different ſpirit and deſign; or if he had led a different life; he would, *then*, not have been *pure from the blood of all.*

Indeed I do not ſuppoſe that any perſons, even the apoſtles themſelves, have ever diſcharged their miniſtry in ſo perfect a manner, and been ſo entirely pure from the blood of all men, as to have nothing to be forgiven, reſpecting the whole management of that ſacred office. Doubtleſs the beſt of ordinary miniſters ſtand in abundant need of pardoning mercy, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for various inadvertencies, defects, and different inſtances of miſconduct, which have occaſionally proved injurious to the ſouls of men.—In my own caſe, I am very ready to acknowledge great deficiencies, many of which I can diſcern upon the review of it, and I truſt do ſincerely lament them; and doubtleſs, if I had a more enlightened, tender, and faithful conſcience, I ſhould be ſenſible of much



* 2 Cor. v. 11.

much more, that would fill me with the deepeſt humiliation.

On the other hand, I conceive there may be conſiderable miſtakes, both in ſentiment and practice, which are not abſolutely inconſiſtent with a miniſter's being a real ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt, who ſincerely aims at his glory, and at promoting the ſalvation of ſouls; and that ſuch perſons ſhall be owned and accepted of their Lord, notwithſtanding their blemiſhes and defects.

In the mean while, I am convinced it is my duty, and that of all other miniſters, to labor, to our utmoſt, after uncorruptneſs of *doctrine*, and exemplarineſs and propriety in *conduct*; carefully endeavouring to avoid all juſt offence to any, which might prove the occaſion of hindering the ſucceſs of our miniſtry. And the greateſt watchfulneſs and conſtant attention are neceſſary to be uſed in this caſe; though it may be often attended with difficulty, and may require great ſelf-denial, and mortification of our corrupt inclinations. But without this be truly our aim, we ſhall doubtleſs be chargeable with the blood of ſouls!

It is evidently very poſſible for one man to "be a partaker of other men's ſins," and miniſters eſpecially are expoſed to that danger, by unfaithfulneſs, connivance at evil, or keeping back ſome

part

part of the counſel of God. *Timothy* the Evangeliſt was not ſo ſecure from this temptation, as to render it unneceſſary for Paul to caution him againſt it.* Surely then it becomes me, and other miniſters in the preſent day, who are ſo far inferior to that excellent young man, to beware leſt *we* ſhould be acceſſary to the eternal ruin of immortal ſouls, and appear, at the laſt day, as it were, ſtained with their blood!

This doctrine of the accountableneſs of miniſters, reſpecting the ſouls of their hearers, is very fully eſtabliſhed by the word of God, eſpecially by the prophet Ezekiel, in the third chapter of his prophecy, (17, 21) and in the 33d chapter, and the firſt nine verſes. And it would be an high reproach to our principles, if we were to reject or ſlight any part of the divine word, under a notion that we could not make that, which is evidently aſſerted there, accord with the reſt of our Creed. It would be a clear ſign either, that ſome of our ſentiments were wrong, or that we did not properly underſtand them. It would be too great a digreſſion to attempt now to ſhew, in an argumentative manner, the conſiſtency of this doctrine of accountableneſs, with what are called the doctrines of Calviniſm; but as ſome weak minds have been puzzled, on this head, by the doctrine of Predeſ-



* 1 Tim. v. 22.

tination, of which I avow myself a firm believer, I would ſpend a few minutes on that ſubject. The eaſieſt and plaineſt method of preventing the abuſe of the doctrine of the divine decrees appears to me, to be by conſidering them in their full extent. No conſiſtent believer of predeſtination will dare to aſſert, that God has decreed *ſome* events, which actually take place, and not *others*. They who hold with that doctrine at all, muſt admit, with the Aſſembly of Divines, that "God hath fore-ordained *whatſoever* comes to paſs." If ſo, then, the decrees of God excuſe *all* ſin, or they excuſe none: they exclude accountableneſs in *every* ſort of truſt, or office, or not in *any*. They render *all* warnings and expoſtulations, *all* commands and invitations abſurd, or *they* do not render *any* ſo. If men may be accountable for the property, the children, the bodies of other men, they may be no leſs reſponſible for the care of others ſouls. If a watchman would be culpable, notwithſtanding the divine decrees, who gave no alarm to a citadel, when he perceived the approach of the enemy; or who being charged with the care of a town, ſhould perceive the flames firſt breaking out in a dwelling, and not attempt to awake the inhabitants, but leave them unapprized of their danger, till they were conſumed by devouring flames; if I ſay, in theſe, or any ſimilar caſes, the moſt firm believer in the decrees would not ſcruple to cenſure the remiſſneſs of him, who had been appointed to care for the welfare

welfare of others; we, that are miniſters, ought to conſider ourſelves as equally bound to watch for your ſouls. And you have no room to charge us with inconſiſtency in owning our accountableneſs, while yet we admit that *the Lord knoweth them that are his*; any more than you would have reaſon to charge a phyſician with inconſiſtency, who ſhould be diligent in attention to the duty of his office, while he confeſſed, that God had certainly appointed who ſhall live or die.

But it is on the contrary, an inſtance of very groſs inconſiſtency, for a profeſſed believer in predeſtination, to leſſen his concern, reſpecting the ſalvation of ſouls, by the abuſe of the doctrine of the divine decrees; while he would aſſuredly never admit that doctrine to be an excuſe for the ſin of his ſervant, in neglecting his buſineſs; miſſing an hopeful opportunity of gain; affronting his beſt cuſtomers; breaking his furniture; injuring his children; or ſetting fire to his dwelling: Whereas the ſtate of his property, the meaſure of his gain, or the lives of his family, are as certainly the ſubjects of God's decrees, as the eternal ſtates of men. The truth is, that in all caſes whatſoever, the *revealed* will of God is our rule of conduct, and not his *ſecret* purpoſe: nor will the accompliſhment of the latter excuſe us for neglect of the former, any more than it would have excuſed Judas and Pontius Pilate. Nor will men be ſo abſurd as to urge

the divine decrees as any excuſe, except when Duty is evidently the object of their Diſlike. Alas, that in ſuch inſtances, they ſhould ſo often attempt to exculpate themſelves, for neglecting their duty to God, or their fellow-creatures, by arguments which would never ſuffice to repreſs their own reſentment, againſt the negligence, or offence, of a ſervant, or neighbour, who ſhould treſpaſs againſt themſelves.

I might in like manner refute the oppoſition which ſome have made to the doctrine of my text, by abuſing other truths of importance, in the ſame way. But it would lead us off too long from our main ſubject, and render the diſcourſe tedious. As the doctrine of our reſponſibility is ſo evidently implied here, and clearly maintained in many parts of the divine word, if any man ſuppoſe it to be inconſiſtent with other principles of revelation, it is evident, he does not rightly underſtand them; but either his religious ſentiments are unſcriptural, or his views of them are very defective and diſtorted, and his abuſe of them tends to their diſgrace.

As Paul implies in this expreſſion, that miniſters *may* have the blood of others laid to their charge, ſo he certainly conſidered ſuch a caſe as unſpeakably awful. For any man to be informed by the ſupreme Judge, "*The voice of thy brother's*

*blood*

*blood crieth out against thee from the ground,"** is tremendous. Many warriors and ſtateſmen, and renowned heroes; and ſceptered deſtroyers of the earth,† will be hereafter appalled at that charge. Dreadful deſtruction awaits them! But the unfaithful miniſter muſt expect to receive greater damnation ſtill. They, who made it their avowed trade to deſtroy men's bodies, will awfully greet thoſe, whoſe pretended employment was to ſave men's ſouls, with that inſulting interrogation, "*Art thou become like unto us!*"‡—Brethren, pray for us! That we who are called to "*watch for ſouls*,"§ may ever remember the account, which will be required of us, and may not, in that awful day, be found guilty of their blood, leſt, of all the inhabitants of the world of miſery, we ſhould be the moſt miſerable.

Certainly the man, who undertakes the care of ſouls, with a due ſenſe of that reſponſibility, which is connected with the miniſterial character, muſt feel his need of omnipotent *Grace* to ſupport him: but he, who ventures on this office without ſuch a ſenſe of his reſponſibility, has ground to dread, and tremble at, Almighty *Vengeance*.

Happy indeed is he, who, like the apoſtle in my text, can with humble boldneſs appeal to God and

* Gen. iv. 10. † Rev. xi. 18. ‡ Iſa. xiv. 10.
§ Heb. xiii. 17.

and man, that he has ſo diſcharged this office, as to be *pure from the blood of all* his hearers.

Much of this conſolation muſt be derived from an inward conſciouſneſs, of which others can but imperfectly judge: That our MOTIVES for entering on this work have been right and ſpiritual;—that we have ſought "not yours, but you;"*—that we have neither advanced, nor concealed, any ſentiment, for the ſake of pleaſing men;—but have endeavoured with diligence and impartiality to ſearch into the mind and will of God, as revealed in his bleſſed word;—accompanying that ſearch with earneſt prayer for divine light and aſſiſtance;—and that we have not ſhunned to declare unto our hearers all the counſel of God;†—teaching them what we have felt, and handled, and taſted of the word of life;—being affectionately deſirous of the ſalvation of our auditory, and ſeeking it with all our hearts; warning every one, and teaching every one, in all wiſdom, with this earneſt deſire, "that we may preſent every one perfect in Chriſt Jeſus."‡

It is of no leſs importance that miniſters ſhould be concerned to watch their own EXAMPLE, and that the tenor of their lives ſhould accord with the ſtricteſt rules they can lay down for others. That they

* 2 Cor. xii. 14. † Acts xx. 27. ‡ Col. i. 28.

they may adopt Paul's appeal to the church at Theſſalonica, "Ye are witneſſes, and God alſo, how holily and juſtly, and unblameably we behaved ourſelves among you, that believe: as ye know, how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children; that ye ſhould walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."*

Upon all theſe heads, my dear friends, I wiſh ſtrictly to examine myſelf afreſh, at the preſent cloſe of my miniſtry among you; and I would bleſs God for any hope of being accepted of him, notwithſtanding all my defects. If I have on the whole, room for rejoicing in the "Teſtimony of conſcience," that I have had my converſation among you "not in fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God,"† it is to him that I would give all the praiſe, knowing that, "By the grace of God I am what I am;"‡ never ſhould I have been enabled to ſtand my ground unto this day, againſt manifold temptations and dangers, had I not "obtained help of God."§

Much alſo depends upon the DOCTRINES, which miniſters deliver to their hearers. We muſt, doubtleſs, "take heed," to our "Doctrine,"‖ if we would promote the edification of the ſouls of men,

* 1 Th. ii. 10—12. † 2 Cor. i. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 10.
§ Acts xxvi. 22. ‖ 1 Tim. iv. 16.

men, and would hope to be found pure from their blood.

And here I ſolemnly profeſs, that I could not account myſelf pure from your blood, if I had not laboured by the manifeſtation of the truth to every man's conſcience to ſubſerve your eternal ſalvation;—endeavouring, as I am confident you muſt acknowledge, to convince you of the worth of the ſoul, and the unſpeakable greatneſs of its loſs; according to the import of that ſtriking interrogation propoſed by him who died to ſave immortal ſouls, "What ſhall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul?"*—and repreſenting to you, in as affecting a manner as I was able, the worthleſſneſs of time ſeparately conſidered, and yet its vaſt importance as connected with eternity. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away."† Yet in this ſhort, tranſitory and uncertain period muſt you be prepared for an eternal ſtate; and as your character and condition ſhall be found at its termination, ſo will your deſtiny be fixed for an endleſs eternity.

I could not have hoped to be found pure from your blood, had I not conſtantly taught you the Extent, Strictneſs, Spirituality and Equity of the Law of God. Without inſiſting ſtrenuouſly on this

* Matt. xvi. 26. † James iv. 14.

this laſt particular, that it is right, and fair, for God to claim, from every rational creature, full conformity to his holy law, not making any allowance, or abatement, on account of your diſinclination, I ſhould have left the *Core* of the controverſy between God and ſinners untouched. I ſhould have given them eaſe in their ſins, and not have been pure from their blood. Under this conviction I have labored and ſuffered reproach, becauſe I would not imply that the ſinner's wicked will was the *meaſure of his duty*, or that God could not juſtly require more from the diſobedient rebel than he was willing to yield. I have inſiſted upon it, that God would not be put off with bodily ſervice, but that he demands the whole heart, and deſerves to be the object of ſupreme affection and univerſal obedience.

Had I not endeavoured to ſhew the *intrinſic evil*, as well as the awful conſequences of *Sin*, I could not have been pure from your blood. But as all Iſrael were obliged, twelve times over, to ſay *Amen* to the awful curſes of the law, and to denounce him "accurſed that continueth not in all things, that are written in the book of the law to do them;"* ſo have I aſſerted that "the miniſtration of condemnation was glorious,"† and that the Judge of the world acted in a manner worthy of himſelf, in denouncing anguiſh, tribulation, and woe,

* Deut. xxvii. 14—26. † 2 Cor. iii. 7.

woe, against every one, that doeth evil. Therefore, "the law is holy and the commandment holy, just and good."* The Sanction of the Covenant of Works is *righteous*, let whoever will fall under it. Often have I pleaded that if the law, as threatening death to the sinner, is not to be justified, the gospel, which declares the curse has been inflicted on God's own Son can never be vindicated. If the original offenders did not deserve death, the death of their substitute must be the most shocking act, that ever was known under the government of God!

While I have thus vindicated the law, and impeached the sinner of a capital offence, against the throne and dignity of Jehovah, or rather of innumerable offences of that magnitude, can you charge me with encouraging Self-righteousness? Can you say I have even insinuated, that one of the human race may possibly be justified by his own obedience? Prove that this has been my aim, and I own I am not pure from your blood! But I have taken it for granted that, as a mean, nothing was so calculated to kill a self-righteous spirit, as a clear demonstration of the extent and spirituality of the law. I know, Paul asserted that his experience accorded with this plan. "I *through the law*, am become "*dead to the law*, that I might *live unto God*."† I imagine those would be much more

* Rom. vii. 12. † Gal. ii. 19.

more in danger of ſelf-righteouſneſs, who ſuppoſe the law to be exceedingly narrow, extending only to the outward conduct; than thoſe, who conſider it as "exceedingly broad," * requiring truth in the inward parts. And hence have I laboured to guard all my hearers againſt the notion of merit in a ſinner, or againſt conceiting that they could counterbalance their bad works by their good ones. I have been careful, indeed, not *ſo* to treat this ſubject, as to give any occaſion to infer, I was ridiculing all ſolicitude about the performance of duty, while I inveighed againſt dependance on a ſinner's own obedience. I endeavoured to prove you could not be juſtified by the law, *becauſe* you had not obeyed the law, and *not* becauſe God had diſcarded it, or becauſe the Mediator had releaſed you from all obligation to obedience; and if I had ſtated the matter differently, I ſhould not have thought myſelf *pure from* your *blood!*

May I not appeal to every hearer, who poſſeſſes a diſcerning and candid mind, that I have repreſented the ſovereign, ſelf-moved *Grace of God* as the only ſource of any man's ſalvation? Have I not uniformly taught you that Salvation is "not *of* him, that willeth, nor *of* him, that runneth, but of God, that ſheweth mercy?" † The promiſe is indeed *to* him, that willeth, ‡ and *to* him, that runneth;



* Pſalm cxix. 96. † Rom. ix. 16. ‡ Rev. xxii. 17.

runneth;* but never did I lead you to believe, that any man's native diſpoſition would incline him to will, or to run, agreeably to the invitations of the goſpel. Often have I reminded you how impoſſible it was, that ſinners, who need a divine Saviour to render their ſalvation conſiſtent with God's perfections, ſhould *deſerve* ſo unſpeakable a gift: and that it was, at leaſt, equally impoſſible, that they, who need a divine Sanctifier, to make them willing to love God, and return to him, ſhould *deſerve* the gift of the Holy Spirit. If then any of you, my beloved, have obtained mercy, it is "*of God*," that you "are in Chriſt Jeſus;"† and wholly of grace: nor can you give any other reaſon for your ſalvation but this, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hath compaſſion on whom he will have compaſſion."‡

Had I laid any other foundation for your hopes than that, which God has laid in Zion,‖ I might expect your blood would cry againſt me, as the enemy of your ſouls. But verily it has been my greateſt delight to preach CHRIST unto you: to recommend him as "altogether lovely,"§ and his ſalvation as "worthy of all acceptation."¶ I have, again and again, directed you to him as a divine and all ſufficient Savior, "able to ſave to

* 1 Cor. ix. 24. † 1 Cor. i. 30. ‡ Rom. ix. 15. ‖ 1. Pet. ii. 6. § Cant. v. 16. ¶ 1 Tim. i. 15.

to the uttermoſt, all them that come unto God by him;"* and as willing as he is able. I have aſſured you, in his own words, that "him that cometh" he "will in no wiſe caſt out."† I have endeavoured to ſet before you the worth, the ſuitableneſs, and the glory of his ſalvation; that ſalvation, wherein God hath abounded towards you "in all wiſdom and prudence,"‡ diſplaying all his perfections in their ſweeteſt harmony; diſcountenancing ſin to the uttermoſt, and relieving the neceſſities of the guilty ſinner; at once pacifying the conſcience, and purifying the heart of the believer.

I have endeavoured to ſhew you the freeneſs of Goſpel Invitations, addreſſed to the guilty, the helpleſs, and vile; without requiring any good qualifications in them, as the preliminary ground of their right to *come to* the Savior. Yes, and I now again aſſure you, on better authority than that of good John Bunyan, that the goſpel is *good news to the vileſt of men*, and that any ſinner, who has heard of Chriſt, may *Come and Welcome* to him for his complete ſalvation. You need not *firſt* know your Election, or prove your Regeneration, neither of which can be proved or known, while you reject him; but though the former is the remote, and the latter the immediate cauſe of any man's embracing the Redeemer, both are entirely ſecret, till the heart is united to Chriſt, and actually coin-

 cides

* Heb. vii. 25. † John vi. 37. ‡ Eph. . 8.

cides with the great ends of his redemption. "Unto "you, O men, I call!" in the Redeemer's name, for his "Voice is to the ſons of men;"* as ſelf-ruined and helpleſs, "without ſtrength" and "ungodly."† "Look unto me" ſaith he, "and be ye ſaved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none elſe."‡ There is not a ſinner in this congregation, but has as fair a warrant to apply to the Savior, as any of the ſaints now in glory had, previous to their firſt application. Whoever enquires, 'May *I come* to Chriſt, and will he receive me if I do?' I reply boldly, Yes, you may, and he will undoubtedly ſave you with an everlaſting ſalvation. If your queſtion were, 'How may I know that I *have been* with Chriſt?' I ſhould give a different anſwer; I ſhould enquire what have you received from him? I ſhould bid you, "Examine, if you be in the faith," and if Chriſt's image is formed within you? But for the ground of your encouragement to come to him, I wiſh you may ſeek for nothing elſe, but the *gracious and indefinite* CALL of his word. I know this to be the doctrine of the *old Calviniſts*, and I believe it to be the doctrine of GOD's WORD, and had I preached the contrary, for many years paſt, I could not have thought myſelf *pure from the blood of all men.*

On

* Prov. viii. 4. † Rom. v. 6. ‡ Iſai. xiv. 22.

On this ground it is, that I have treated Unbelief as a Sin, and the *worſt* of all ſins. Yet carefully explaining my meaning, that by unbelief I do *not* intend a doubting of your own ſafety, which I wiſh all to do, who have not ſcriptural evidence of it. But by unbelief I mean, an averſation of mind from God's method of ſalvation, a diſcrediting of God's teſtimony concerning his Son, a rejection of Chriſt's mediation, a refuſal to reſt with complacency in the doctrine of the croſs, or an habitual unwillingneſs to return to God in the name of Jeſus. This is a Sin beyond all that fallen angels have had opportunity to commit. And yet, as if it had been a light thing to tranſgreſs without a cauſe, and violate God's holy and unexceptionable law, many of you have long added, to all your other iniquities, this ſin alſo, of trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God, neglecting and making light of his great ſalvation.* Surely if ever you are thoroughly convinced of ſin, you will be convinced of this ſin of unbelief;† and if I went about to excuſe this evil, I ſhould do all that in me lay, to counterwork the genuine leadings of the Spirit of God, and could not, eſpecially with the view of things I have long had, conſider myſelf as *pure* from your *blood!*



* Heb. ii. 3. Matt. xxiii. 3. † John xvi. 9.

I do not think I could have eſcaped the ſame awful guilt, had I not ever maintained the vileneſs and *total depravity* of the human heart, and the abſolute need of the divine and efficacious Influence of the HOLY SPIRIT, to renew and ſanctify the ſoul. Though I thought it my indiſpenſible duty to call ſinners to repentance, and a cordial ſubmiſſion to the goſpel, I never flattered myſelf with a hope that they would be obedient to the heavenly mandate, unleſs power from on high was exerted, and "the arm of the Lord revealed."* Yet I durſt not inſinuate that the ſinner's obſtinacy was excuſable, on account of its needing divine energy to ſubdue it, but thought it my duty to guard you, as much as poſſible, againſt ſo ſalacious an inference. Nevertheleſs, I have frequently, and copiouſly inſiſted on the humbling, but ſcriptural doctrine of efficacious grace. I have taken pleaſure in aſcribing every good thought in the human mind to the Spirit of God as its author, and have taught you to do the ſame: but I did not think it right *ſo* to bring in this doctrine on the back of every exhortation, as to encourage ſinners, or ſaints, to conſider Duty as annihilated, or Negligence as palliated by it. The Neceſſity of Regeneration, by the immediate influence of the HOLY SPIRIT, I have firmly believed; and therefore have I ſpoken conſtantly of that ſacred agent as the only author of ſpiritual life:

* Iſa. liii. 1.

life: I conſidered every man as being, by nature altogether eſtranged from God, and under the entire dominion of ſin; or as the apoſtle terms it, *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*. But I durſt not repreſent *that*, as any better excuſe for a ſinner, than it would be to plead that he *is alive to ſin*. To be dead *in* ſin, and to be alive *to* ſin, are evidently expreſſions of the ſame import: and are the worſt deſcription, that can be given of our native ſtate. The apoſtle uſed the former phraſe to expreſs the vileneſs of the natural man, and who could have thought, that the ſubtlety of Satan would have turned it into an apology for the neglect of all that is good?—I earneſtly wiſh that thought may be ſeriouſly conſidered, and remembered by all my hearers, which I ſuggeſted in this morning's diſcourſe. That the operations of the Spirit are neither the *Ground*, nor the *Meaſure*, of any man's Duty; though I repeat my cordial acknowledgment, that they are, indeed, the cauſe of our *compliance* with our duty. And once more I remark, that, as *Regeneration* cannot poſſibly be known, but by its effects in *active converſion*, it is therefore, unſcriptural, and irrational, to wait for evidence of renewing grace, before we accept of ſalvation ourſelves, or direct others ſo to do: though it is both rational and ſcriptural, for all, who have believed, to aſcribe their faith to the efficacious operations of the holy Spirit. Much the ſame obſervation might be made reſpecting

his

his subsequent influences on the minds of those, who are already renewed. Hence it has not been owing to my forgetfulness of what I have often taught concerning divine efficiency, that I have so freely indulged myself in the use of scriptural exhortations. I have done so upon principle. I have been fully assured that the doctrines of unalterable *human Obligation*, of *total Depravity*, and of *efficacious Grace*, were thoroughly consistent; and indeed that the *latter* cannot be defended to advantage, without implying and maintaining the *former*. The more I have considered this matter, the more I have seen the impropriety of giving sinners barely *such* advice, as, perhaps, their carnal hearts may not oppose. I dare not, in my pulpit addresses, direct them merely to do such things as they may actually perform, and yet perish for ever; for fear they should conceive this to be the whole of their duty, and consequently should not guess at half their sin. I have told them expressly, that they must repent, and return to God, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ;* hoping God would thereby convince them that impenitence, and unbelief, and perseverance in sin, are criminal; and that, while I proclaimed his commands and invitations, he might *take away the heart of stone*, or the very disposition to resist his will, and thus induce them to obey the call of his word. And if I had gone by any other rule, I fear I should have deceived

* Acts xxvi. 20. xvii. 30. xvi. 31. iii. 19.

deceived immortal ſouls, and have been chargeable with their *blood!*

In addreſſing ſuch as are already profeſſors of the goſpel, I have carefully endeavoured to diſtinguiſh between vital religion and its counterfeits. I have been afraid of deceiving myſelf, and afraid of your being deluded by falſe religion, and a ſpurious, or mutilated goſpel; and of my being in the leaſt acceſſary to ſo awful a miſtake.—It has not been with a view to mark out others as objects of your ſuſpicion and cenſure, but with a deſign to excite in you all a godly jealouſy againſt ſelf-deception, that I have ſometimes attempted to delineate the characters of the *legal*, and of the *evangelical* hypocrite, as they have been termed, not improperly, by ſome of our moſt experimental divines.* I have endeavoured to ſhew what an eſſential difference there is, between that religion, which indicates a new creation, and implies an hearty

* By the *legal* hypocrite we intend the man, who cries up the law in oppoſition to the goſpel: and by the *evangelical* hypocrite, the man who, under pretence of magnifying the goſpel, vilifies the law.—Perſons of the *former* claſs, profeſs a great regard to the practice of morality, though their own conduct is often moſt evidently defective; but they ſcorn ſalvation by grace, and ſee no need of the merits of Chriſt; unleſs it ſhould be to profit them a little, by making up for a few defects. But their own virtue and good life are the ground on which they hope for acceptance with God. Meanwhile like Saul the phariſee, they are *alive without the law.* Though they expect juſtification by their own works, the law itſelf encourages no ſuch hope in a ſinner. But they are ignorant of the nature and extent of its demands. If they ſaw the ſpirituality of the divine law, and knew that it denounces a curſe againſt them, for want of perfect obedience, they would ſoon feel their hearts riſe up in black rebellion againſt its author: or elſe,

hearty reconciliation to the divine character and government, and thoſe pretended ſchemes of religion, which gratify the pride of man, and leave the enmity of the carnal mind againſt God and his law unſubdued.

I could not believe myſelf to be pure from your blood, if I were not conſcious that I ſtrove to guard you againſt all the miſtakes into which I could think you were in danger of falling: not only oppoſing

if that enmity was ſlain, and they both underſtood and approved of the law, they would then perceive their need of Chriſt, and flee to him for ſalvation, who hath magnified the law and made it honorable.—On the other hand, the *evangelical* hypocrite, who profeſſes to love free grace, but is at heart an enemy to the law, is equally remote from the character of a true chriſtian. His religion is entirely the product of ſelf-love, acting in another form. At his ſuppoſed converſion, he was terrified with a dread of puniſhment, but never thoroughly convinced of the juſtice of God in his condemnation; but when he heard of ſalvation by grace, he was pleaſed with the hope of deliverance from torment, without the trouble of obedience. His faith conſiſts merely in a confidence of his own ſafety; and no ſooner had he attained to a perſuaſion of his intereſt in Chriſt, but he had done with the appearance of repentance, and ſoon learnt to deſpiſe it as a mean, legal thing. While religion is a novelty with ſuch perſons, their conduct may be in ſome reſpects altered but they ſoon ſink into worldlineſs, if they do not run into groſſer wickedneſs; though they keep up their ſervity by falſe views of the goſpel; and if they do not become viſibly dead and careleſs, they ordinarily are full of ſpiritual pride, enthuſiaſm and cenſoriouſneſs.—But theſe perſons have as little love to the genuine goſpel, as thoſe of the former claſs bear to the original law. Did they underſtand how fully the Mediator juſtifies God and his government, condemns ſin, and conforms his people to his own image, it would be found that they muſt have a better converſion than they had yet experienced, or they would hate both him and his Father.—It may be feared that too many deceive themſelves in each of theſe methods, but, commonly, people will diſcover, or diſguiſe, the bias of their hearts, either toward ſelf-righteouſneſs, or toward ſelf-indulgence, according as the Miniſters, they ſit under, encourage or diſcountenance, one or other of theſe fatal extremes. May your Miniſters ever guard againſt both!

poſing groſſer hereſies, which may be held by people at a diſtance, but endeavouring to warn you againſt all perverſions of evangelical ſentiments. I have been anxious that you might be kept from error, and from ſin; that you might be preſerved not only from viſible licentiouſneſs, to the ſcandal of your profeſſion, but alſo from ſecret lukewarmneſs and indifference towards the things of God. I have wiſhed above every thing to be inſtrumental in impreſſing your minds with a deep conviction of the holy tendency and deſign of the goſpel, and that you might be enabled to walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory. Dear brethren, *Look to yourſelves, that we loſe not thoſe things, which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.** 

My dear hearers! If I had preached unto you any different doctrine from that, which I have actually delivered, I ſhould have injured my own conſcience; and I cannot but believe, that if there had been any material difference, it would have tended to the injury of your ſouls. Bleſſed be God, that I have the teſtimony of conſcience, that what I have delivered unto you, has been according to his word. Nor has my goſpel been yea and nay. Wherein ſome have thought me inconſiſtent, I have not at one time contradicted what I ſaid at another through forgetfulneſs or an unſettled mind: But have been fully convinced, after much examination,

* 2 John 8.

mination, that those things were truly consistent, and very important; which some thought to be otherwise, for want of more thorough and impartial investigation.

From my heart, I have sought, and do still earnestly desire, the everlasting salvation of all, who have attended my ministry, including those, who have disapproved of it, more or less. The friendship, I have experienced, both from the church and congregation in general, I hope ever to remember with gratitude and affection. And I pray God, that a successor may be provided, who shall state the truth more clearly, distinguish the nature of true religion more thoroughly, and labor among you more successfully, than ever I have done: If we live long, may we meet repeatedly on earth, and may we finally meet in glory.

With unspeakable pleasure I indulge the hope, that I now address many, who shall be found my "Joy and crown of rejoicing, in the day of Christ Jesus;" and whose eternal felicity will prove "that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." Nor am I satisfied with barely hoping respecting others, that their blood will not lie at *my* door. I pray also it may not be upon their *own* heads, but may they *now*, or *very soon*, be turned from their sins unto God, lest they should die in sin, and sink in irretrievable perdition.

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THE END.